

Health Promotion in Motion

A Healthy Holiday Season

During the holidays, people gather to celebrate. Often, food is a major focus of holiday gatherings. Those foods connect us to our traditions, families and community. Is it possible to get through the holidays without gaining weight? The answer is “yes” – you can even enjoy traditional holiday foods. The key is planning ahead.



Common Trends in Holiday Weight Gain

Research shows that people at a healthy weight gain about one pound during the holidays. Overweight individuals (62% of adults in the U.S.) gain an average of **five pounds** during the holidays. This weight is often maintained even after the holiday season. Over time, this extra weight gain can add up. With some simple planning, many of us can make it through the holidays maybe not any lighter, but at least not any heavier.

Add Activity

Find ways to add activity into something that you already do:

- Instead of driving around a neighborhood to look at holiday decorations, find a central place to park and walk. Wear bright clothing and reflective items and carry flashlights so cars can see you.
- Park farther away from stores and mall locations so that you add a few minutes of walking as you get to and from your car.
- Get together with friends and family for a snowman-building contest. Snowmen can be decorated to look like each family member or a friend. Be creative. Give prizes for the best use of decorations, best dressed, most creative, etc.
- Instead of inviting friends over for food and drinks, start a new tradition that involves activity!
 - Invite friends to meet at a sledding hill. This is a great low cost fun activity that burns lots of calories.
 - Go snow tubing with friends. All the equipment is ready and waiting for you at the tubing park! Bring your hat, jacket, mittens, and boots. This holiday gathering will be remembered a lot longer than the average party!



Healthy Holiday Eating

- Bring a favorite low-calorie dish to holiday parties so you know there will be at least one “safe” item. Stand far away from buffets so you are not tempted to continually nibble.
- Make family or traditional recipes lower in fat and calories. The Internet is a great resource for healthy recipes and ideas for reducing the fat in a recipe. Test one batch of your adapted recipe to be sure you like it.
- Alcohol is packed with calories. An average alcoholic drink is only 6-8 ounces but it may have 500 calories – or more. That’s the same as a small meal.
- Don’t arrive at a party hungry. Skipping breakfast and lunch will make you even hungrier later. You are less apt to over eat if you don’t skip meals.
- Watch your portion sizes. Try to eat a variety of foods but in small amounts.
- Save a little room for holiday treats, but choose wisely. For example, one slice of pecan pie has 450 calories, while one slice of pumpkin pie has half as many calories, saturated fat, and sugar.
- Pay attention to how quickly you eat. Savor the flavor by eating slowly.
- Try a low fat fruit and vegetable recipe – visit www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov.
- When the party is at your home, put low-calorie and fat-free salad dressing on the menu. Fill the table with flavorful vegetable dishes and make reduced-fat versions of your family’s favorite traditional dishes. Ask your family which foods are important to them – avoid making foods no one really wants.



**Enjoy this holiday season and special moments
shared with close friends and family.**

